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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR EMPLOYMENT: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Language is the vehicle of ideas. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed, according to Swami Vivekananda. Steven Pinker in his influential book, "The Language Instinct" has said, "Language is so tightly woven into human experience that it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it". It is thus integral to thought and culture, making human life rich and communal. It is an undeniable fact that shows the importance of language in our lives. Now-a-days, we equate English learning with success. It has become obligatory for the students to speak out their minds correctly for, speaking and writing have become so vital in deciding their very careers. Moreover, they must keep abreast of the latest trends for attaining lucrative jobs in reputed companies. The way English is taught in schools and colleges in India does not help the students cope with international standards and grow into global citizens. The multinational companies offer jobs to those whose communicative competence is at its highest. The sad thing is that we are not giving importance to the skills required. It should be done on a war footing because, if we neglect to do so, there will be an irreparable loss to the students in particular and the society in general. In this paper, I would like to focus on and give inputs for improving the critical thinking, speaking and writing skills of the students to facilitate their easy access to the employment.

Keywords: English Language, Employability, Critical thinking, Speaking , writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning English has become indispensable for students to get jobs now-a-days. Communication skills help them overcome language phobia and change them into global citizens. In David Crystal's words, "There is no reason to believe that any other language will appear within fifty years to replace English as the global lingua franca". This statement stands testimony to the importance of English language. Higher education is usually seen as a way for individuals to seek employment and improve their economic status. Unfortunately, in developing countries, the labour force is often growing faster than the labour market. Graduate unemployment remains a reality for many in countries like India and South Africa. This is due to the fact that there is a gap between the needs and expectations of the companies and the quality of graduates leaving the educational institutions. This skills gap should immediately be bridged in order to cope with the needs of the employers. The famous thinker John Dewey once remarked that education "is not an affair of telling and being told, but an active constructive process". Unless this constructive process is properly done, our youth force will go astray and without employment, which in turn leads to unrest in the society. Who are the trouble shooters now? It is only the teachers who are cognizant of the impending dangers and possible solutions. They should shoulder the responsibility, set right this deplorable condition and seek out innovative methods to find avenues for keeping the societal peace intact.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the skills needed for every student (LSRW). Listening and speaking are interrelated, so also, reading and writing. The more one listens, the better one acquires speaking skills. Similarly, the more one reads, the better one acquires writing skills. Writing and speaking are equally important to the students aspiring to get employment. One should not be acquired at the cost of the other skill. The need of the hour is to become efficient in rightly connecting emotionally with others and communicating with them in a proper manner. But this is grossly ignored as the teachers are reluctant to spend extra time to inculcate good speaking skills among the students. Their teaching is restricted to the text book, and they are busy in completing the targeted syllabus. Hence, they are unable to spend much time for speaking in the classroom and consequently, the students are not adept in speaking.

CONCEPT EXPANSION

English Language in the present-day world does not limit itself to concrete books and journals, but its scope has been widened with the oncoming of internet that turned the world into a global village. So, on par with the changing trends, the teaching fraternity also have to move with the times, and change themselves according to the needs. Now teaching goes beyond the normal class rooms. Many online sources are outwitting the traditional sources, making the students more potential than even the teachers. Unless the teachers update their knowledge and align with the moods and aspirations of the students, they will be lagging behind. For that, they should first become the citizens of the virtual world. Kumaravadivelu while writing about emerging strategies, asserts that there is a huge chasm between what theorists conjure up out of the world of theories and what teachers face in the actual

classroom world. Most of the methods are not implemented because they are not evolved out of classroom experience.

Internet has converted the world into a classroom where we get access to different kinds of English-speaking people. Our constant exposure will help us merge with English speaking society by erasing temporal and spatial differences. In Krashen's view, comprehensible input is available in the virtual immersion so that language learning takes place automatically and involuntarily. Consistent practice of language learning yields good results. Now we have various platforms to learn English. Watching English movies, listening to BBC news, podcasts, English music, audiobooks etc will help us familiar with English accent. Interactive sites like TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) talks, online courses on Coursera (A major American online learning platform) will help a lot to improve one's English usage.

HOW TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG THE STUDENTS:

This is a challenging task to the rural students as they have so many inhibitions. By talking to one's self may boost one's confidence. Expanding new vocabulary by following English newspapers is obligatory for the students. The main focus should be on phrases and idiomatic expressions and their usage in different contexts. Generally, the students are often afraid of being laughed at in case they speak wrongly. But the teachers should encourage them to speak by creating various situations like student seminars, group discussions, picture reading, storytelling, narration of various incidents and so on. To learn a language perfectly, one has to use it frequently. Maximum time be allocated to speaking practice. In order to improve clarity, one has to speak with slow pace. It will also help us to recollect the ideas. More importantly, one should maintain eye contact with the listeners, and this will surely not allow the audience to talk and make a noise. Grabbing their attention with audible voice is the important requirement for any speaker. Some people try to speak like native English speakers. But it may not be possible for all to speak like that. So, we can speak like our great Indian speakers who deliver the content with clarity in Indian English.

HOW TO FACE INTERVIEWS:

In any interview the interviewers will ask the candidates three questions. 1. Say about yourself. 2. Why have you opted for this job? 3. If you are given the job, how would you help us? If the students are confident enough to speak for half an hour on these three questions, they will succeed. Being polite to everyone with a smiling face, being honest, wearing formal dress, speaking clearly, slowly and concisely when asked, maintaining natural eye contact (Body language) to project confidence, not lying at any point will help a great deal.

CRITICAL THINKING-WRITING SKILL:

Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue to form a well-reasoned judgment, involving questioning, analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information rather than just accepting it. It's a disciplined process of using logic and evidence to form conclusions, and make sound decisions. By breaking down complex information into parts, assessing the credibility, relevance and strength of evidence, drawing logical

conclusions from the available data, asking probing questions to explore deeper meaning etc, are the core components that come under critical thinking. For those who appear for competitive examinations, critical thinking will greatly help while solving the problems. In English, by consistently applying the strategies like asking probing questions using who, what, which, when, where, why, and how, one can draw conclusions. By reading carefully, noticing word choices, examples, and structure, one can understand the concept properly. Contextual thinking greatly works in solving the problems.

e.g;

"He has to ***go*** without food".

"She had to *go* without proper vacation this year."

In the above sentences, the word "go" does not mean the act of going. We have to understand the meaning contextually. It means to manage, survive or subsist in a certain state or condition. In sentences like, "He *runs* a shop" (=manages), "She *falls short* of ten rupees"(=not having) , "His face *glows* with joy" (= appearance of happiness), "He fails to *meet* the demand" (=fulfil, satisfy), I cannot *stand* criticism (=withstand, endure), etc., the italicised words give other than their literal meaning in the context.

We usually think that the expressions inflammable (=more flammable), invaluable (more valuable) as negative words. In fact, they are not negative words like "inescapable", "ingratitude" etc . The meaning of free in "aids free society" is different from the meaning of "free" in "freebies" "I got it free".

The students should vigorously practice the rearrangement of jumbled parts to improve logical thinking. They should also practice synonyms, antonyms, homophones, spellings, concord etc' Some examples for Idioms are, We must *hang on* every word (listen very carefully), To be light years away (to be too distant for us to reach), A fish out of water (feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar circumstances), up in arms (protest angrily about sth). The grammatical item, "Fill in the blanks with appropriate options" is an important task to be practiced**.**

e.g; The manager provided ----------feedback to the team and ----------their efforts in meeting project deadlines.

A) Constructive, delusion B) destructive, appreciated C) foreseen, criticised D) constructive, acknowledged

In the above sentence two blanks are given to fill them with appropriate words as per the context. The context is that the manager is dealing with his team members. The sentence seems to run on positive tone. So, there should be something positive but not negative usage of words. In the second option, we see a negative word. So it is not appropriate. In the third option, the word "foreseen" seems irrelevant. So it is not our option. In the first and last options, the first word is positive and seems to be our choice. But the second word in both the cases finalises the answer. Since the manager appreciates his team, we have to use the word "acknowledged" instead of "delusion". Here structurally also we can eliminate the word "delusion" because it is a noun. What we need as per the context is a verb in the past form. So, the Answer is D.

The item **"Spelling errors"** reminds us the importance of practicing spellings in context as follows**.**

e.g; He **intends** to make a **through search** of the shop before he opens the door to **customers**.

A) intends B) through C) search D) customers

In the above line the word "through" bears correct spelling, but it does not make sense when it is placed in that context. The suitable word is "thorough"

The important item "Error corrections in sentences" may be given anyway. Errors may be given from concord, prepositions, articles, phrases, parts of speech, word order and so on.

e.g; Ravi booked an Air Asia flight/, but he was taken back / when the airline showed the destination/ and arrival terminals of the same place.

In the above sentence, as per the context, some thing negative should be written because Ravi experienced a shock. So the phrase "taken back" is to be replaced with "taken aback" which means shocked.

Errors in concord:

e.g; The parcel/ sent by the students/ have safely reached/ the destination.

In the above sentence, we find the error of proximity. The subject key word is "the parcel". Since ir is singular, the verb also should be in the singular only. So "have" is to be replaced with "has".

CONCLUSION

English language learning has become an important thing now-a-days. To see that our students are well trained in language, the teachers at all levels have to make an extra effort. They must focus on writing as well as speaking abilities of the students by showing them various sources of learning. In fact, it's not so easy as we think to realise this task. The students have to walk an extra mile to achieve their desired goals. English language learning, focusing mainly on critical and analytical thinking will yield good dividends. The students must learn what the companies expect. They must improve their critical thinking, communication skills and logical reasoning. The metaphorical meaning is important rather than literal meaning in answering the questions. In this way, by improving writing and speaking skills, the students will get employment.

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